

**IMPROVEMENT**  
**OF**  
**THE FISHERIES;**  
**OR,**  
**A PLAN**  
**FOR PROCURING ABUNDANT, NEVER-FAILING**  
*Supplies of Provisions*  
**FOR**  
**THE INHABITANTS OF THE THREE UNITED KINGDOMS;**  
**FOR**  
**Promoting Universal Industry,**  
**AND**  
**INCREASING THE STRENGTH AND SECURITY**  
**OF THE**  
**BRITISH EMPIRE.**

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THE FISHERIES

THE FISHERIES

A PLAN

FOR OBTAINING ABUNDANT REVENUE

FROM THE FISHERIES

THE INHABITANTS OF THE FISHING VILLAGES

Promoting Universal Industry

AND

INCREASING THE STRENGTH AND SECURITY



UNITED KINGDOM

LONDON

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*Improvement of the Fisheries,*

*&c. &c.*

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*COPY of a Letter presented to the Committee of the House of Commons,  
Dec. 8, 1800, then sitting on the Means of providing Relief for the  
Poor\*.*

AT a time like this, of unparalleled distress, when famine stares us in the face, with all its horrors, and our enemies, leagued with our former friends, meditate our destruction, it is the duty of every man, who has any thing to offer for the public relief, to step forward with his mite, submitting it to the Legislature for their adoption, if they approve of it; permit me therefore to recommend the Fisheries on the Coasts of Ireland, as the most immediate and effectual relief for the poor of these kingdoms; a measure, which, if entered upon largely, will form an ample substitute for other provisions; and enable us, not only to withstand the storm of the day, but to bid defiance to all our enemies.

\* This letter, when first written, I intended to have inserted in the TIMES, but was persuaded to present it to the Committee of the House of Commons, who readily received it.

There is on the Southern coast of Ireland a large Bank, called the Nymph Bank, abounding with large cod, hake, and ling; and there is another Bank of still greater extent, reaching from the South and running northward on the Western Coast of that Kingdom: how far it extends into the Atlantic Ocean, is not yet ascertained; but that these Banks abound with Fish in incalculable quantities, is well known, nor can we doubt if this business was properly laid before Government, but it would be forwarded with all that alacrity and support, which the importance of the subject deserves.

Mr. WARE, in his Antiquities of Ireland tells us, that among the many advantages of Ireland must be reckoned the great and plentiful fisheries of Salmon, Herrings, and Pilchards, which, salted and barrelled, were every year exported to foreign parts; and after mentioning that Whales had been frequently taken on several parts of the Coast of that Country, informs us that a Mr. RICHARD CHAPLIN set up a Fishery for Sun-fish (a small species of whale) near the harbour of Killybeggs, and received parliamentary encouragement. This having been done in those days, what may we not hope for from the munificence and protection of the Imperial Parliament at a time like this? We cannot doubt, but the duty upon Salt will be given up, so far as may relate to this Fishery; that bounties will be given to establish and expedite this business; that all local and partial interests, and prejudices, will give way to the speedy establishment of this great National Benefit, now especially that an Union has been happily made between Great Britain and Ireland, and they have been formed into one Imperial State.

This



This business presents also to my view in the clearest light, the support of His Majesty's Navy, the bulwark of the British Empire; and I am firmly of opinion that if any thing can effectually check the pride and insolence of our combining enemies, it will be the establishing of this Fishery upon the large principle, of which it is capable. It will prove to them, that we are neither to be starved nor subdued; our poor will be plentifully fed; and His Majesty's Navy will have a constant accession of many thousand seamen (after allowing protection for a sufficient number to carry on the Fishery, and removing the necessity of that barbarous custom of Impressing); in time of Peace it will give full employment to our disbanded seamen, by whose labours in the Fishery not only these kingdoms may be plentifully supplied, but all Europe! Of the truth of this great business in all its parts, and in all its happy consequences, as I here state it, no man can remain in doubt, who will take the trouble to examine into all the circumstances and advantages of this Fishery, and how far it will contribute, if wisely managed, towards confirming, and maintaining the Empire of Britain on the Sea, in spite of all our Enemies.

I am, with all due respect,

Your obedient servant,

JOHN DIXON,

*No. 5, Lower Phillimore-Place,  
Kensington.*

N. B. Numbers of seamen from the neighbouring nations are employed in fishing on these Banks in time of Peace, who are turned against us in War!

B

HAVING

HAVING been desired to produce authorities for the above, I beg leave to submit the following Extracts from ANDERSON'S History of Commerce, and Mr. KNOX'S History of the Fisheries, &c. &c.

“ Sir JOHN BORROUGHS, keeper of the Tower of London, says in  
 “ his Treatise of the Sovereignty of the British Seas, (first written anno  
 “ 1633, and published anno 1651, p. 80) Philip II. King of Spain,  
 “ obtained licence for his subjects to fish upon the North Coast of  
 “ Ireland, for the term of twenty-one years, paying yearly for the same  
 “ 1000l.” (ANDERSON'S History.) “ And Mr. KNOX tells us, that  
 “ White Fish abound on the West Coast of Ireland, but the Banks  
 “ have not been sufficiently explored, and no Fishery hath yet been  
 “ established with success.” In proof of which he produces what Sir  
 LUCIUS O'BRIEN said in the Irish House of Commons, namely, “ That  
 “ with due encouragement he should not despair of seeing Fishing  
 “ Vessels fitted out from every harbour in the Kingdom of Ireland, to the  
 “ infinite emolument of the whole. Some ports, and those hitherto the  
 “ most neglected of all,” said he, “ may possibly have advantages, the  
 “ knowledge of which is not yet sufficiently ascertained, I mean in the  
 “ North, and North-western parts of Ireland, off which there is the  
 “ strongest reason to believe there are Fishing Banks, perhaps, as prolific  
 “ as those of Newfoundland, though their nature and extent hath not  
 “ hitherto been explored; and if so, the Fishery may be carried on still  
 “ cheaper from the neighbouring ports. In several very ancient maps  
 “ I find,” said he, “ the Bay of Galway, called the Bay of Hakes, from  
 “ the quantity of that fish with which it was supplied.” And further, what  
 Sir WILLIAM MONSON, who was one of the most experienced seamen  
 England

England ever bred, in the fourth book of his Naval Tracts, takes notice of, viz. "That from the Island of Rona, off Scotland, and between  
 " fifteen and sixteen leagues from the Island of Lewis, there runs a Bank  
 " of 100 miles in length, as far as Till-Head in Ireland, which Bank  
 " affords a great quantity of the best Cod and Ling of any part of the  
 " seas, which had not for one hundred and odd years been used; but  
 " these bountiful gifts of Providence," adds he, "remain utterly neglected."

And also among many other proofs he produces the following:

" In the year 1740, JOHN ATKIN, Master of the Friendship of Air,  
 " coming from Virginia round the North of Ireland, when about thirty  
 " leagues west, by their reckoning, from the Island of Tory, saw distinctly  
 " a shoal under water, about fifty yards from the vessel, on which he  
 " judged there might be about four feet water.

" In October 1746, the commanders KELLY, JOHNSTON, and  
 " THORNTON, sailing in company from Virginia for Liverpool, about  
 " twenty-five leagues west from Tory Island, heaved the lead, each of  
 " them, and found sixty-five or seventy fathom, *sand* and *shells*; between  
 " that and Ireland they sounded again, and found no bottom.

" About the year 1756, Mr. BACHOP, of Londonderry, coming from  
 " Philadelphia, was becalmed about twenty-two leagues N. W. of the  
 " Island of Tory, without sight of land, he sounded and found the depth  
 " thirty fathom, then throwing out some fishing lines, caught about 150

“ Cod in two hours time; the wind springing up, they made sail, and in a few hours saw the land, on the North-west coast of Ireland.

“ In the year 1769, when Mr. MURDOCH M'KENZIE, in the sloop Bird, was taking views of the West coast of Ireland, about the distance of from three to seven leagues from the land, wherever there was an opportunity of trying to catch fish, the crew found them, particularly off the Islands off Inishlank, and Boffin in Mayo, where happening to be becalmed, they caught Cod, Ling, and Holly, one or other of them, as often as their lines could be let down.

“ At Broad Haven in Mayo, the people have a general persuasion, that there is a Fishing Bank, twenty or thirty leagues westward of their coast, and affirm that they have seen several ship-masters who have taken fish there; the like persuasion prevails of a Fishing Bank, off Mallbay, in the county of Clare, about six or eight leagues S. W. from the Island Durfey; and at the S. W. point of Ireland there is a shoal, called the Lock, on which several fishing ships from Kinfale take abundance of Ling every year, from the month of April to September. In short, there seems to be a general opinion, supported by a multitude of facts, that there are exceedingly profitable Banks off these Coasts, though their limits are not ascertained. Mr. M'KENZIE, whose authority will be of considerable weight, is persuaded of it, and he thinks they run almost parallel to Ireland, and extend all the way from Shetland to the Nymph Bank, off Waterford: others apprehend they run also towards the Banks of Newfoundland, and even extend the whole of that way.”

Being



Being fully persuaded from these, and many other documents, that there are very extensive, and most valuable Fishing Banks on the Coasts of Ireland, I wish to recommend this great Source of National Relief for the present, and hereafter of National Strength and Wealth, to the attention of every sincere friend to his King and Country, and particularly to the Imperial Parliament; for besides the great advantages already mentioned, of procuring abundance of wholesome and nourishing food for our own people, &c. &c. a new and extensive trade may be established, employing numbers of now idle, and starving poor, furnishing such an additional Nursery for Seamen for the Navy, as to preclude the Necessity of Impressing, and of employing foreigners on board our merchant ships in time of war, who after having been made complete seamen in our service, are frequently called home to turn against us that very skill and knowledge which they have acquired among us, besides carrying away considerable sums of money, which might have greatly benefited our poorer orders; and most advantageously circulating amongst ourselves, might have promoted comfort, content, and unalienable attachment to their own government, in the most numerous, and most useful classes, viz. the labouring poor.

This, I doubt not, the Imperial Parliament will in its wisdom take into consideration. Thus quenching in our bountiful seas, all discord, all difference of opinion, and interest; thereby combining most firmly the Strength of these Kingdoms, and uniting the hearts of all His Majesty's subjects.

In

In the last century several attempts were made by the governments of England and Scotland to establish Fisheries on the coasts of these kingdoms, for instance, " In 1661, Charles II. the Duke of York, Lord Clarendon, and other persons of rank or fortune, resumed the business of the fisheries: for this purpose the most salutary laws were enacted by the parliaments of England and Scotland, in virtue of which all materials used in, or depending upon the fisheries were exempt from all duties, excises or imposts whatsoever; but these attempts proved fruitless, the ensuing national discontents and consequent distress preventing their success."

" If ever this national object shall be accomplished either wholly, or in part, it will be solely owing to encouragements given not to Companies, but Individual Adventurers, and the abilities of those adventurers to persevere in that business against all accidents that may attend it, both in the Capture, and the Sale of the Fish."

This we are taught by the example of the Dutch, who first tried by companies, but were soon obliged to relinquish that plan for an open trade, giving all possible encouragement to every individual who would engage in the business, by which means they met with success beyond all example.

Sir WALTER RALEIGH relates, " that in the year 1603 the Dutch sold to different nations as many herrings as amounted to 1,759,000*l*. that in 1615 they at once sent out 2000 busses, and employed in them 37,000 fishermen; that in 1618 they sent out 3000 busses with 50,000  
" men

“ men to take the herrings, and 9000 more vessels to transport, and sell  
 “ the fish; which by sea and land employed 150,000 men, besides those  
 “ first mentioned. All this wealth,” says he, “ was gotten on our Coasts  
 “ while our attention was taken up in a distant Whale-fishery !”

Sir WILLIAM MONSON draws a comparison between the West India Trade and the British Fisheries, wherein he uses various arguments to prove, that the latter branch is, upon the whole, more important than the former, and merits the first attention of the British Government, “ You will  
 “ wonder,” says he, “ that being born a British subject (*an Islander*) and  
 “ casting your eyes upon the gainful soil of the land, that you never conceived what the seas afforded. What better light can we have for this,  
 “ than from the Hollanders, to whom,” says Sir WILLIAM, “ we may  
 “ justly attribute what the Chinese assumed to themselves, viz. that only  
 “ they have two eyes, some other nations but one, and all the rest of the  
 “ world none? How can this better appear than out of their labours, and  
 “ our fish only? They have increased,” says he, “ the number of vessels;  
 “ they have supplied the world with food, which otherwise would have  
 “ found a scarcity; they have advanced trade so abundantly, that the  
 “ wealth of subjects and the customs of princes have found the benefit of  
 “ it. In four provinces within the Sound,” continues Sir WILLIAM,  
 “ viz. Koningsberg, Melvin, Stettin, and Dantzic, there is vended in the  
 “ year betwixt 30 and 40,000 lasts of herrings, which will amount to  
 “ more than 620,000*l.* and we none !

“ Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Leisland, Rie, Regel, Narpe, and other  
 “ towns within the Sound, take off above 10,000 lasts, worth 160,000*l.*

“ The

“ The Hollanders fend into Russia above 1500 lafts of herrings, fold  
“ at 27,000*l.* and we not above thirty or forty lafts!

“ Stade, Hamburgh, Bremen, Embden, and upon the river Elbe, in  
“ fish and herrings above 6000 lafts, fold at 100,000*l.* and we none!

“ Cleveland, Juliers, up the river Rhine, Frankfort, and Cologne, and  
“ over all Germany, in fish and herrings, near 22,000 lafts, amounting  
“ to 440,000*l.* and we none!

“ Guelderland, Artois, Hainault, Brabant, Flanders, and the Arch-  
“ duke's countries, 8 or 9000 lafts, fold at 18*l.* the laft, amounting to  
“ 160,000*l.* and we none!

“ At Roan in Normandy, 500 lafts of herrings, fold at 10,000*l.* (and  
“ we not 100 lafts) there commonly fold for twenty and sometimes thirty  
“ pounds a laft.

“ Besides what they spend in Holland, and sell there to other nations,  
“ the value of many hundred thousand pounds, we cannot give an account  
“ of 150 lafts taken, and vended by us.

“ All *people* of what *degree* soever, in Holland have commonly a share  
“ according to *their abilities* in this *Fishing Trade*!

“ If we pay the least attention to the original state of the Dutch  
“ Fisheries, or by what means they (the Dutch) raised themselves, to their  
present



“ present state of opulence, we shall find that they were absolutely nothing  
 “ more than mere Fishermen, who had collected themselves into a small  
 “ body from different quarters, and lived in huts, erected upon the spot  
 “ then called Damsluys, which still retains its name ; but to the astonish-  
 “ ment of travellers, when inquired for, will be found in the centre of  
 “ the famous city of Amsterdam.

“ The great increase of people in process of time obliged them to  
 “ seek new fields (fishing places), of course none could be found more  
 “ eligible than the Fishery which they discovered on the coasts of  
 “ Ireland.

“ Our seas were their ORIGINAL MINES, as acknowledged by them-  
 “ selves, as may be seen on the face of one of their proclamations, for  
 “ the encouragement of their Fisheries, bearing date anno 1624 ; they  
 “ there call them their GOLDEN MINES !

Sir LUCIUS OBRIEN justly observes, “ That the Dutch were enabled  
 “ by their Fisheries not only to defend themselves during the course of a  
 “ long war, but to beautify their country, fortify their cities, establish a  
 “ powerful marine, and fix colonies in the most distant parts of the  
 “ world ; and in the midst of all these expences, to increase daily in  
 “ wealth and splendour : and therefore it is not without reason that by  
 “ order of the States it is inserted in the daily prayers offered up in their  
 “ Churches, that God would be graciously pleased to bless their land, and  
 “ preserve to them their great and small Fisheries.

“ The

“ The French too have benefited themselves exceedingly by this trade,  
 “ and yet these nations are obliged to seek their fish on our coasts, by a  
 “ long and expensive navigation in large ships, while Providence bring-  
 “ eth them even to our doors ! It might be expected we should be  
 “ able to take them at a much less expence, and cure them more per-  
 “ fectly on our own shores ; and yet His Majesty’s subjects have not yet  
 “ been able to establish this Fishery effectually.”

“ A Fishery near home may be carried on with greater expedition,  
 “ and with less expence and hazard to the parties concerned.

“ The general utility of these Fisheries may be thus stated, They  
 “ would give employment to a considerable number of persons, of both  
 “ sexes, and of all ages, as sea-men, land-men, ship-builders, coopers,  
 “ net-makers (which is chiefly performed by women, and children, and  
 “ old people incapable of other work), rope-makers, sail-makers, black-  
 “ smiths, salt-makers, colliers, carters, day-labourers, &c. besides sup-  
 “ plying themselves and their neighbours with cheap food, and ex-  
 “ tending commerce.”

The deep-water Fishery is to be carried on by busses or decked  
 vessels from twenty to eighty tons burthen, which ought to be at their  
 fishing stations early in the season, and attended by quick-sailing vessels  
 to run with their first prime fish to London, Dublin, Edinburgh, &c.  
 &c.

These

These Fisheries are so abundant and inexhaustible, that there will not be the least occasion to restrain the praise-worthy industry of the Dutch; but we should rather let them remain, to be a powerful stimulus to us, to follow their wise example. Their whole system of fishing laws, may prove an excellent model for us to follow.

Thus if they have raised themselves from being a company of obscure Fishermen, to wealth and greatness, erecting cities on their barren sand banks, turning their fishing huts into splendid palaces, establishing distant colonies, supporting a formidable navy, sometimes disputing the empire of the sea! all this from fishing on our coasts, which they call their GOLDEN MINES, what may not Britons hope to do (over and above supplying their poor with abundance), blessed as *they* are, with a better soil, a better climate, lords of the ocean; and now united under the best of Sovereigns.

I am, with all due respect,

Your obedient servant,

JOHN DIXON.

No. 5, Lower Phillimore-Place,  
Kensington.

These Ethnics are so abundant and inexhaustible, that there will not be the least occasion to restrain the pride-worthy industry of the Dutch; but we should rather let them remain to be a powerful stimulus to us, to follow their wise example. Their whole system of fishing laws, may prove an excellent model for us to follow.

Thus if they have raised themselves from being a company of obscure fishermen, to wealth and greatness, erecting cities on their barren land banks, turning their fishing boats into splendid palaces, establishing distant colonies, supporting a formidable navy, sometimes disputing the empire of the sea! all this from fishing on our coasts, which they call their Golden Mines, what may not Britons expect to do (over and above supplying their poor with abundance), if fish as they are, with a better soil, a better climate, and now raised under the belt of

I am, with all due respect,

Your obedient servant

JOHN DIXON.

No. 2, Lower Phillipsburg Place  
Washington

N. B. L. & Co.,  
30 Adelaide Street, Wool-Street.



